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# The Catholic Historical Review

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## THE STUDY OF CHURCH HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

### I.

It is a truism that history is the oldest and wisest of teachers. Her lessons are based upon universal experience. They are corroborated by a multitude of facts and observations, and whenever the latter have been collected, sifted and disposed by some masterly hand, there is none to gainsay the philosophy that is in them or deny their utility and pertinency. So true is this, that as soon as men emerge from barbarism their first effort is to keep some record of the events that pass around them. In their uncivilized state rude mythological notions, the war-song or battle-cry, the notched club or hatchet, the funeral chant or the hymn of victory—mere passing voices—resumed their knowledge of the past and their concern in it. But with advancing culture the annals come into use, and the simple but continuous chronicle. The records of what men held to be good or evil, of victory and defeat, of disastrous natural phenomena, interest the community henceforth, and as the same or similar events recur, there arises a dim curiosity as to the reasons for them, the connection of cause and effect, the influence of circumstances. As the social and political framework becomes perfect, and grows venerable with age, other questions arise anent the origin of old-time institutions, customs and habits, until there is scarcely a phase of human life that does not engage the attention of mankind. In turn, all the great political systems into which human energy and ambition have crystallized bear public witness to man's respect for the teachings of history and

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *Catholic University Bulletin*.

his instinctive craving to develop positive guidance and instruction from the comparison of the past with itself or with the present. Egypt, Assyria, India, Persia, Greece and Rome, have left us in written histories the highest flowering of their genius. There was never a great nation of antiquity that did not recognize among the sources of its power and the pledges of its duration the study of its origin and of the vicissitudes of its social and political life. Some have even carried it to exaggeration. Thus China with its ancestry-worship and its marvellous ancient chronicles. Nevertheless, it remains true that the highest exponents of social humanity have ever recognized the potent pedagogic influence of the study of the past.

The study of history furnishes the facts for that useful comparison of the present with the past that is the usual source of popular satisfaction or discontent. It develops the faculty of reflection, and is a kind of easy homely philosophy within every man's reach. It unrolls the world-old and world-wide panorama of virtue and vice, of strength and weakness, of mighty ambitions and secular injustice. It unveils the vast network of causes that determine the rise of some nations and polities, and the decay or downfall of others. "History is a divine epic," says Frederick von Schlegel, "and the historian a backward-looking prophet."

"Here, peradventure in this mirror glassed,  
Who gazes long and well, at times beholds  
Some sunken feature of the mummied Past,  
But often only the embroidered folds  
And soiled magnificence of her rent robe,  
Whose tattered skirts are ruined dynasties  
That sweep the dust of aeons in our eyes,  
And with their trailing pride cumber the globe."

It exhibits to each the gradual formation of his country—that ideal unit of political aggregation. It is the very milk of patriotism. Above all it shows us an over-shadowing Providence, which everywhere draws good from evil, or makes evil the bridge, the stepping-stone to good; which acts with a larger patience and surer knowledge than any poor generation of men can possess; which never fails to justify the righteous cause,

and to brand with infamy all the monster iniquities that for a time walk shameless and triumphant upon earth.

## II.

Sainte-Beuve says truly, that "peoples need history almost as much as they need religion." Indeed, religion has always embraced the history of the peoples it undertakes to enlighten and console. Because of this intimate relationship between religion and history, the knowledge of the past was always regarded in antiquity as a peculiar apanage of the priest. In ancient Egypt the hoary chronicles of the Pharaohs were in the keeping of the priests. In rude republican<sup>2</sup> Rome the priests were at once the chronologists and annalists. They drove in the temple wall the nail that marked the passing of the year, and they set up yearly on a whitened block of oak the simple annals of Rome's infancy, the overflow of Tiber, the angers of the gods, the success or failure of the crops, the invasions, the successful border raids, whatever minute matters could interest the urban or the rustic tribes.

Religion and history have always been closely united, almost as the soul and the body, for history in general represents the human social framework of things, and religion imports a special Divine Presence that has always permeated human society, and always will permeate it in a lesser or a greater degree, whether it grovels among the Digger Indians or thrones aloft in the pure serene atmosphere of old Hellas.

It is remarkable that all the relics of religious truth, all the useful social and political life-germs found among the peoples of antiquity were also preserved, but in a higher degree, among the Jews, as though God would make a great Ark of that chosen people, in which necessary divine and human truths might cross the ocean of time from the corrupt, decaying Old World of hopeless spiritual bondage to the New World which Jesus Christ

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<sup>2</sup> Pontifices, penes quos scribendae historiae potestas fuit. VOPISCUS in *Vita Taciti*, I. 1. Among the earliest efforts at Roman literature are counted the *fasti*, the *annales*, the *libri pontificii*, an interesting reminiscence when we recall the fact that the episcopal histories of the early Middle Ages were written in imitation of the *Liber Pontificalis* of the popes.

threw open to the eyes of the soul and to its illimitable holy ambitions—an idea that Prudentius has consecrated in his *Catherinon*:

“Darkness, begone! and clouds and mists of night!  
 The sun ariseth! brightness fills the sky!  
 Concused, disturbing forms before him fly;  
 So, in the world’s sad gloom and dreary plight,  
 Christ comes, and all is Light.”

I need not recall the rôle of history in the Old Testament. Most of the books are histories or historical. Nearly all are concerned with Jewish life, and are in themselves vivid canvases of that most wonderful of national polities and lives. In these holy books history is saturated with religion, history is the trumpet voice of religion, is the channel of religious thought; even the inspired utterances of the prophet are often dressed in the garb of history.

It has been well said that these sons of Israel are our spiritual ancestors, since their imagery, their poetry, their very names have descended to us, since their hopes, their prayers, and their psalms are ours. In an eloquent paragraph, Dean Stanley has touched upon the permanent value of the wonderful events that once took place on the hills or in the valleys of Palestine and Syria.<sup>3</sup>

### III.

It is no wonder then that in the religion of Christ,—itself

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<sup>3</sup> “Let us not fear lest our reverence should be diminished by finding those sacred names and high inspirations under the garb of Bedouin chiefs and Egyptian slaves, and Oriental kings and Syrian patriots. The contrast of the ancient inward spirit with the present degraded condition of the same outward forms is the best indication of the source whence that spirit came. Let us not fear lest we should, by the surpassing interest of the story of the elder Church, be tempted to forget the end to which it leads us. The more we study Jewish history, the more we shall feel that it is but the prelude to a vaster and loftier history, without which it would be itself unmeaning. The voice of the old dispensation is pitched in too loud a key for the ears of one small people. The place of the Jewish people is too straight for the abode of thoughts, which want a wider room in which to dwell. The drama, as it rolls on through its successive stages, is too majestic to end in anything short of a divine catastrophe.” *The Province of Ecclesiastical History*, p. 22.

no new religion, as the earliest Fathers remind us, but the original celestial gift, perfection and fulfillment of the institutions and the promises of the past,—history should, from the beginning, have played a very prominent part.

It has a four-square corner stone, the Gospels, on which are written four little histories, as though to blow to all quarters of the world the deeds and doctrines of Christ Jesus. Scarcely had its first adherents combined in the rudest kind of gatherings, when they began to keep their little archives, at Corinth, at Antioch, at Rome, at Jerusalem. The authentic correspondence of the Apostles and their immediate disciples was long preserved and read in the primitive churches. Mementoes or monuments of the Apostolic times were also kept as in a museum. Within a century of the deaths of Peter and Paul, Hegesippus had drawn up a little manual of Church history, his principal documents being the episcopal catalogues of the original Apostolic sees, and notably that of the bishops of Rome. (Euseb. H. E. IV. 22.) Before him, Papias of Hierapolis had written his reminiscences of Gospel interpretation. Both before and after, nameless authors had written of the missions and the wanderings of the Apostles. Heretics had even then poisoned the fountains of historical truth with false narratives of the origins of Christianity, and the Church was already obliged to put in motion her winnowing fan to sift the true from the false.\*

In the mutual reports of the bishops to one another and to the synods, in the incessant travel of highly educated Christians like St. Justin and Clement of Alexandria; in the careful keeping of archives, in the preservation of the Acts of the Martyrs, of records of baptism, deaths, marriages, funerals; in the accounts of heresies and schisms and persecutions, the spirit of history was fostered in the Church and its materials secured.

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\* At a later date men regretted the loss of accurate Church traditions concerning the persons and missions of the Apostles. "Oh, that we might meet with a man who could give us the history of the Apostles! Not a history, however, containing only what they wrote and spoke, but one portraying for us the whole tenor of their lives, what and where they ate, when they remained at home, when they went forth into the world, what they did every day, what places they visited, what houses they frequented, what journeys they undertook by sea and land, and all narrated with the greatest exactness, for every detail is of the greatest utility to us." ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, in *Ep. ad Philemonem*.

Scarcely had Hegesippus passed away when Julius Africanus and Hippolytus arose, one to give us a chronological record of Christian vicissitudes, the other to continue the annals of Hegesippus or some similar early writer. Since then the annals of the Church have never wanted a compiler until the crowning work of Baronius appeared. There have been periods in the Church when theology, philosophy, the classics and literary culture in general, have been at a low ebb, but never one when the hand of the historian was palsied. The unbroken record of Catholic action must be kept up, and so from Eusebius to the triad of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, through the abbreviators and translators of the fifth and sixth centuries, and from them to Bede and Isidore and the rude barbarian annalists of Germany and France, the good work went on. In turn they handed it over to the polished court of Charlemagne and the Irish teachers of Central Europe, and they in turn to the debased and uncultured chroniclers of the tenth century, that lowest ebb of ecclesiastical studies. But with the ecclesiastical renaissance of Gregory VII there came a sense of freedom, a feeling in the ecclesiastical body that a true Egyptian bondage had been broken. At once history became a power in the Church. There appeared during two centuries such chroniclers as Lambert of Hirschfeld, Otto of Freisingen, Sigebert of Gembloux, Odericus Vitalis, John of Salisbury, and others. The splendid monastic chronicles of the high Middle Ages, great and masterly books though little known, were written then. Increasing culture, larger political experience, the Crusades and Oriental travel, the classical revival and the discovery of the New World, gave fresh impetus to this oldest and most venerable of the ecclesiastical sciences. It grew in volume and grasp and method until it blossomed forth into the magnificent proportions it assumed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

#### IV.

What is the subject-matter of Church history? The history of religion, indeed, might have been a very simple one, if it had not been that in our first parents the happy and easy covenant of God and man was broken. Since then man has had no more

painful problem than how to focus again the scattered rays of religion that once shone like a sun in His spiritual firmament. In this process there are three well-defined stadia: Heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity. In Heathenism the divine rays of religion were very few, and overlaid with earthy influences, ever growing, and ever darkening the eye of the soul against its Maker. In Judaism God set aside a people with a special revelation for their belief and conduct. Among them, therefore, the light of religion shone strong and invigorating. Nevertheless they were only a preparation for His sublimer later mercies, the revelation of Himself, the Sun of Truth, in the Person of the Eternal Word.

The last of these three stages, the Christian Church, is usually known as the Kingdom of God, because its Founder and invisible Regent is divine, its members are children of God, and its authority and teachings are of divine origin. It is called, too, the Kingdom of Heaven, because in its doctrines and ideals it is a miniature of the celestial life, because it has the unbroken presence of the King of Heaven, is in perpetual communication with the heavenly abode, and has for its last end complete absorption in the world of pure spirits.

The history of the Church is therefore the history of the Kingdom of God on earth from the creation of man down to the present time. It includes in a larger sense all the vicissitudes of religion from the creation to our time, a view of the history of Christianity that is common to all great ecclesiastical writers from the days of Eusebius down.<sup>5</sup> The especial object of Church history, however, is the development and vicissitudes of the society founded by Jesus Christ, to perpetuate His mission as the Redeemer of mankind.

In detail, therefore, the history of the Church, as we have seen, includes her missionary work, the obstacles to it within and without, her constitution, administration, discipline, doctrine and art; the public life and morality of her children; the

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<sup>5</sup> "But although it is clear that we are new, and that this new name of Christians has really but recently been known among all nations, nevertheless our life and our conduct, with our doctrines of religion, have not been lately invented by us, but from the first creation of man, so to speak, have been established by the natural understanding of divinely favored men of old." EUSEBIUS, H. E. IV. 4.



forms and conditions of her worship; the writing and preaching of her bishops and priests—in a word, every phase of her activity.

It includes a very great share of profane history, for the Church is in the world as the soul is in the body,<sup>6</sup> and while she affects greatly the moral, social, political, and intellectual conditions of men, she is in turn affected by them. This may be seen at a glance by comparing the Church of Gaul under the Roman and under the Frank, the Church of England under the Saxon and under the Norman, the Church of Italy under Byzantine and under Teutonic influences, the Church of America before the Revolution and since.

It is only man who has a history. Nature undergoes, indeed, many changes, but they are fixed repetitions, according to unchanging laws. The stars roll on in their courses, and the bee makes his golden cell, just as it was done from the beginning. But with mankind it is otherwise. The free-will of man is a fountain of infinite change, and his restless all-questioning spirit is an inexhaustible mine of ideas, impulses, plans and hopes, that cross and recross one another in bewildering confusion. The object of history, in as far as it is a useful science, is to preserve out of all this mass of happenings what is worthy of note for our instruction. Not everything is a fit object of history,—only that which instructs, elevates, ennobles. It is true that much which to one age or one period of culture appears trivial, becomes of the greatest importance to another,—archæology and folk-lore, once despised, have to-day become very dignified members of the historical world. Now the happenings, the events of human interest may be of such a nature as to affect

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<sup>6</sup> "Christians are to the world what the soul is to the body. The soul is dispersed through all the limbs of the body; so the Christians are dispersed through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells within the body, yet it is not part thereof; so the Christians dwell in the world, and yet they are no part of it. The soul is invisible, yet is guarded within a visible body; so the Christians are visible in the world, yet their worship is a thing invisible . . . . The soul is immortal, and yet dwells in a mortal tabernacle; so, too, Christians sojourn among things corruptible, waiting for the incorruption of heaven. The soul is made better by being stinted in the matter of meat and drink; so Christians increase more and more by being daily punished. God has assigned them a certain place to fill, and it is not lawful for them to refuse to fill it." *Epistola ad Diognetum* (circa A. D. 140.) c. vi.

the whole race, its habits, its surroundings, its government and the like, or they may affect only a part: a family, a community, a province, a state, a continent. Hence the subject-matter of Church history is affected by the point of view, universal or particular, taken by the student. While the whole is never well known unless the parts are clearly understood, and while the reverse is equally true, it is evident that one who would be well grounded in the history of his race must do some judicious mixing of his readings, and not neglect either of these great general divisions. Indeed, it would be well if every ecclesiastic read once in his student life, preferably at the beginning, some general history of mankind. Just so a traveler climbs a high peak to get a broad and comprehensive view of the land he means to explore,—the principal land marks, the roads, and the obstacles.

Precisely to limit the subject-matter of Church history is not easy. The influences of the Church vary in extent and intensity; circumstances of a political or social character widen or narrow her field of action; the temperaments of peoples and the preoccupations of epochs, moral regradation, suspicion and prejudice, mental and material transformations of the world of humankind,—a multitude of considerations affect her action within and without. In the person of an Innocent the Third she might usurp the poet's word—

“Nihil humani a me alienum puto.”

And again, she might find herself relegated to the narrowest margin of action and influence, the divine ichor in her veins barely flowing, an outlaw in the eyes of societies that she had created and made great. Then, too, her action is not always visible, measurable at first glance, so deep and wide wander the roots of spiritual forces, so subtle and unseizable are the impulses of the Holy Spirit.

## V.

The principal advantage of Church history to the general student is a philosophic one. It is the Church, the undying mission of Jesus to suffering humanity which gives us the true

philosophy of history, the key to the labyrinth, the vantage-ground from which we may survey the battle-field of good and evil. The problem of the existence, nature, and source of evil underlies all philosophy and all religion. *Πόθεν κακόν, Unde malum?* was the title of several little Christian tracts in the second and third centuries. The enormous overflow of suffering had shaken human belief in the divine. Tacitus, the foremost of ancient historians, had come to the conclusion that the gods took an impish delight in human misery, that the sight was as comforting to them as the steam that arose from the sacrificial altars. Since then others, like Hegel, dream of a reign of absolute reason, a perpetual progress of mankind through almost endless vicissitudes. Others again, like Buckle, see in the course of human events only the blindly exact mechanism of law, as implacable as the flow of the tides or the motion of the planets.

But the Christian beholds the whole world as the work of God, whose merciful designs were frustrated from the beginning by man's free will, but who began in that very moment the restoration of the fallen race. We see from the very beginning the Word of God active for man. In His image had man been made, and in that image must he be restored, says St. Athanasius in that marvellous little treatise of his on the Incarnation. While error and pride, ignorance and sin, crass materialism and despotism, were evermore destroying human dignity and liberty, the Word was ever busy among men, illuminating, guiding, suggesting, strengthening. The mighty fires of His divinity shone as it were through a veil. The Fathers often speak of these manifestations as the *λόγος σπερματικός*, the scattering of the rays of His blessed light. Job, Pythagoras, Socrates, and, as St. Justin says, all who have died for the sake of truth or justice, were illuminated, however dimly, by the light of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Thus we see flowing from the roots of the Tree of Life a double stream,—the black flood of sin, and the small crystal brooklet of divine grace that waters the little green oases of human hearts

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<sup>7</sup> "And those who lived with the Word (according to reason, the law of nature) are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians Abraham and Ananias and Azarias and Misael and Elias, and many others." ST. JUSTIN, *Apol* I. c. 46.

in different lands and different ages, but especially in the persons and actions of the Old Testament.

In this manner was the ground prepared for the New Temple not built of hands, and when Heathenism and Judaism had run their day, Jesus Christ laid the corner-stone of that Temple whose coursers and stringers are human souls, and whose cement is divine grace. This Temple is the mystic body of Christ, when it shall be completed then the end is night, as the Shepherd of Hermas tells us in a charming vision vouch-safed to him by the Tiber over eighteen hundred years ago.<sup>8</sup>

I might say much more of the utility of Church history,—how it refines the spirit of the priest, and makes him largely tolerant and patient, by unfolding to him the incredible extent of human weakness and the mystery of God's triumph over it; how it is eminently suggestive of plans and schemes for actual good; how it breaks the awful impact of scandal by showing that evils come about through neglect of law, obedience, charity or patience; how it consoles by the examples of saints of every condition, and instructs by the writings of holy churchmen, and delights by the growth of all the arts under the influence of the Christian Spirit. Its influence on the theologian is great, as a man, a Christian, a student, a priest. As a man, he learns from it that the Church he serves has ever been the friend and uplifter of humanity, and has stood as a wall of brass against oppression and injustice; that slavery and barbarism have withered before its tread, and that Cæsaropapism and blighting Islam have been warded off by it alone from our Western society. As a Christian, he learns a broader, more discriminating charity from the sight of so much human weakness, so much discrepancy between graces and deeds, office and conduct, the "fair outside and foul within." He learns the almost irresistible power of circumstances, early training, climate, topography, prejudices, inherited trend of thought and character. As a student his judgment may be trained to a quasi-mathematical precision by acute observation, his mental vision may be so sharpened by practice as to discover shadows and out-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Pastor Hermae*, Sim. IX. c. 13. FUNK, I. 224.

line, and motion and life, in what seems deep night to ordinary men—

“the dark backward and abysm of time.”

He may mete out, with incredible nicety, the human and the accidental in ecclesiastical affairs: the malice and the intention, the ignorance, the stupidity, and the great undefinable margin of causality that no one can fairly name or describe, since its workings are hidden with God. As a priest and leader of the people, it multiplies and deepens his sympathies, brings him out of the abstract and theoretic into touch with the iron realities of life, and accustoms him to see the shaping hand of God, like the weaver behind his loom, creating fairest patterns, though the ordinary looker-on observes nothing but din and disorder.

“To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expressions,”<sup>9</sup> has ever been counted the specific purpose of any liberal teaching. None of the ecclesiastical sciences is better fitted than the history of the Church to exercise such a direction on the mind of the student. The course of events, “old in its texture, but ever new in its coloring and fashion,” is like a genial old pedagogue, with mind well stored and heart ever young and unspoiled, under whose mild and beaming eye the hearts of his pupils are as wax. If the object of knowledge on the part of the priest be, with St. Bernard, “to edify and to be edified,” then there is none better suited to the churchman than the history of the society to which he belongs.<sup>10</sup>

This is indeed the age of history, as Augustine Thierry has remarked. It is the special intellectual gift of the nineteenth century, and all things correspond to make its influence irre-

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<sup>9</sup> NEWMAN. *Idea of a University*, V. p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> Sunt qui scire volunt eo tantum fine ut sciant, et turpis curiositas est; et sunt qui scire volunt ut sciantur ipsi, et turpis vanitas est; et sunt item qui scire volunt ut scientiam suam vendant, verbi causa, pro pecuniis pro honoribus, et turpis quaestus est. Sed sunt qui scire volunt ut edificent, et charitas est, et item sunt qui scire volunt ut edificentur, et prudentia est. *Sermo 38, super Cantic.*

sistible.<sup>11</sup> What a change is taking place before our very eyes. The boundaries of actual peoples and kingdoms and empires are shifting with kaleidoscopic rapidity. Whole peoples pass from one set of influences, from one form of political control and management to influences and control that are based on absolutely divergent principles. For the past, the votaries of history ransack all archives, exhaust all libraries, turn up feverishly whole provinces, piece together with the most admirable accuracy and patience the scattered tales of dead ages. The religions of the entire world, the sacred books of all religions, the origins of every dissension, are sifted with a new acumen and perfected instruments of judgment, comparison and control.

So deep is the devotion to historical method, so vast the resources placed at the disposal of this science, so tremendous are the responsibilities borne by its professors that history has in a certain sense become a religion unto itself, as though the relations of God and man, the manifold mystery of human life, might be systematized on the basis of a backward vision embracing in its mighty sweep all happenings, with concomitance of circumstances, causes and motives, as well as obstacle and furtherance. Surely it is not an age when we can be content with the outlines, the mere heads of theses, the titles of chapters. More is needed if we would do our duty by the peoples committed to our care, and who may not ask us always the questions of which their hearts are full. "Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis." Christianity is not only the most rational of religions, one that rouses and urges the human mind incessantly, by virtue of its deep fresh currents of love and faith and idealism. It is also the most historical of religions. Not the least charm it exercised over the Wandering Nations in the fifth and sixth centuries was the unity and logic which it brought into their views of the world and man and life by means of the Old Testament histories, and the magnificent

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<sup>11</sup> L'étude de l'histoire, surtout dans ces profondeurs qui sont à la fois si obscures et si directement rattachées à notre berceau exerce sur tout esprit délicat une séduction intime et pleine de douceur. MONTALEMBERT, *Moines d'Occident*. Introd. p. VI.

commentary on them that was furnished by the first four Christian centuries.<sup>12</sup>

The most sublime event of the world's history is the foundation of that Church, by which a new and supernatural factor entered into the world's life, and new principles of thought and conduct supplanted forever the old *Weltanschauung*. It was as another flood, after which the individual, the family, the state, human society found themselves in absolutely new conditions. In the place of error came truth, in the place of idolatry adoration in spirit and truth, in the place of heathen folly and corruption with its pollution of human worth and degradation of the family and extinction of personal liberty, there came Christianity proclaiming the freedom of the children of God, the supernatural dignity and end of man, the equal dignity of woman and children and slaves; in place of darkness there came the reign of light and life and grace and truth.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, when we behold the Church coming forth unstained and triumphant from a thousand dangers our faith is strengthened and we recognize with St. Augustine a perpetual miracle greater than the resurrection of the dead. Then, too, when we see scandals and corruption, and worldly ambition and intrigue; when we see bad means used to further good ends, and the very good themselves sunk below their own level; when we behold "the Captive Good attending Captain Ill" we do not lose heart nor turn cynics. We know that scandals must come, that the root of free will is in man, that his very excesses prove it,

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<sup>12</sup> A curious proof of this is the sarcastic argument of St. Cumman of Durrow (634) in his letter to Segin , Abbot of Iona, on the determination of the South Irish bishops to adopt the Roman Easter: "Roma errat; Hierosolyma errat; Alexandria errat; Antiochia errat; soli tantum Scoti et Britones rectum sapiunt!" MIGNE, PL. LXXXVII, c. 969. Cf. BEDE, E. I. c. 1.

<sup>13</sup> "Ought we not to gain some insight (from the study of history) into that mass of evidence at once for the truth and power of Christ which was necessarily known to the first believers; to learn what Christendom, after all, deductions, can do in the way of witnessing for Christ; how promises have been largely, though not as yet completely, fulfilled; how virtues neglected by Heathenism have got their rights, and vices long tolerated have been branded with due shame; how the type of character exhibited in the Gospels has been the permanent moral enrichment of humanity; what a stimulus to practical faith is to be found in the lives of eminent Christians, ancient, medi val, modern; how the significance of doctrine has thus become more apparent, and the 'credo' been felt to be more 'worth living for and dying for?'" BRIGHT, *On the Study of Church History*, London, 1894, p 17.

that the gifts of the Father did not prevent Adam from falling, nor the Divine Presence of the Son forestall the freedom of Judas and Peter. For want of this knowledge such historians as Arnold and Spittler have turned the history of the Church into a kind of "Memoirs of Bedlam" or a *Chronique Scandaleuse*.

## VI.

The science of Church history is of comparatively modern growth. No doubt, Eusebius and Socrates and Sozomen and Theodoret have narrated the many events of the first five centuries. No doubt the germs of this science lie embedded in the pages of the great Eusebius. The ancient annalists and chroniclers of the early Middle Ages, like Jordanes, the venerable Bede, Paul the Deacon, and others; the more skilful historians of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, like Lambert of Hirschfeld, Tierney of Cluanmicnois, Matthew of Paris, Roger of Hoveden, the great Benedictine chroniclers and the Dominican historians, the shrewd and observant narrators of the fifteenth century, like Poggio, Aeneas Sylvius (Pius II) and Platina, have collected a priceless mass of facts, dates, appreciations and the like. But nearly all these works are of local or particular interest, and cover but a short period of time, refer usually only to the great political events and their surface causes, are sometimes written from a narrow point of view by passionate participants in the strife.

Moreover the Church was yet dominant in all the lands of culture, the mighty web of civilization was still being spun upon the ancient framework of society, such as the Church itself had raised it out of the splendid ruins of the Graeco-Roman world. Therefore men did not stop to seek causes, compare ages, classify facts. Everything was quite natural, it seemed to them. Since Constantine the Church and State had gone hand in hand, the orthodox cause had never failed to triumph, the Church was ever widening her drag-nets. No one disputed her divine origin or office. The work before churchmen was chiefly of a moral or administrative character. Literature, art, the science of government, all the traditions of society were everywhere centered about the bishop, the abbot, the parish priest. Wherever men looked they saw the beneficent figure of the *Ecclesia*, in whose



shadow all life was glad and hopeful and flourishing. There was no criticism of her titles to respect, obedience, and love, any more than the child criticises the mother's authority and right. It was the period of tutelage, a real *Juventus Mundi*.

But there came a rude awakening. After twelve centuries of unity and concord, the Church was torn by the most frightful of dissensions. The superb system of her theology was assailed by thousands of writers. Her history was flung open and made a source of endless mockery. Her deeds, institutions, even her intentions and her spirit, were cruelly travestied in the first wild rush of spiritual rebellion. An exaltation of anger, like that of the French Revolution, seized on whole nations, and men no longer saw what had been, but only the figments of their own passion. In the twinkling of an eye these nations fell away from her obedience. The old-time union of Church and State was profoundly shaken, and in its place arose a gilded slavery of the Church. The imperial unity and authority, long a mere myth, were destroyed. The independent nations of modern times began their course, dragging at their chariot wheels the great and ancient churches of their territories. After a century of revolution the Church found herself on new ground, and her history since that time has been one of skilful, if slow, adaptation to the profound changes worked in the innermost nature of society and government.

The science of Church history was now possible. On the one hand the great triumphant epoch of the Middle Ages was closed, and the Church was going down again into the arena of the world, to undergo a second persecution, both sanguinary and literary, for a second period of three hundred years. Churchmen were obliged to look back and compare, examine, deduce principles from the multitude of facts, co-ordinate those principles, draw conclusions. The great revolution of the sixteenth century compelled the defenders of the Church to go over item by item every one of her ancient titles, and to justify them as it were before the bar of public opinion,—to rehabilitate legally a caluminated character.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is to the pressing literary needs created by the Reformation that we owe the work of the Bollandists and the Benedictines, the corrections of the Breviary and the Martyrology, the canonical labors of the *Correctores Romani*, and notably of Antonio Agostino.

The Reformation forced Catholic writers to study the past more profoundly. Theological discussion raged fiercely on every point, and scarcely a single institution of Church history was left unassailed. From the very beginning, by a fatal necessity, the discussions were carried into the province of history. The traditional principle was yet strong in Europe.

The Protestants were not slow in formulating their views of Church history. In the ancient city of Magdeburg a number of their writers compiled (1559-1574) a history of the Church according to centuries,—hence called the “Centuriatores.”<sup>15</sup> In each century they discussed the doctrine, discipline and institutions of the Church. It was the first formal effort at Church history as we understand it to-day. The work was an unscrupulous, malicious one, written with the “knife” of Matthias Flaccus. It did great harm for several years. But the providence of God always raises up the right man in the right time. At Rome, St. Philip Neri selected from the members of his little congregation a priest named Cæsar Baronius, and bade him teach Church history to the people in the new church of Santa Maria. Seven times this great man taught the Roman people from the pulpit the whole history of the Church. He knew that every age has its own needs and that it was no longer the time to discuss metaphysics or scholastic theology. In due time his copious discourses, his notes, and the multitude of documents extracted from the Vatican and other Roman archives took shape and were published as “Annals of Church History.”<sup>16</sup>

In this book was born the science of Church history. It is not free from faults, like any human production, but for the first time the world saw a faithful picture of the Catholic Church, such as she was from the birth of Christ down to the twelfth century, for Baronius himself got no further than 1198. For fulness of materials and simplicity of exposition, broad, judi-

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<sup>15</sup> *Ecclesiastica Historia integram ecclesiae ideam complectens, congesta per aliquot studiosos et pios viros in urbe Magdeburgica.* Basileae, 1559-1574.

<sup>16</sup> *Annales Ecclesiastici a Christo nato usque ad annum 1198*, 12 vols. fol. 1588-1604. The best edition is that of Mansi, Lucca, 1738-5, in 38 vols. fol. It has been reprinted at Bar-le-Duc since 1864. Baronius copied this vast work three times with his own hand. One of these autograph copies is preserved in the Vatican. “I have trodden the wine-press alone,” was his sad reply to a bishop who asked him how many secretaries he employed.

cious and luminous divisions, critical and impartial spirit,<sup>17</sup> multitude of new documents, high and honest devotion to the cause of the Church, it was unequalled. In that first essay of scientific Church history there were many weak points no doubt. Who will blame the pioneer if he leaves many a tree and rock as he clears away the primeval forest for the first time? Who will blame the great chemists and electricians if they erred often in their laborious studies? Horace says he must have been armed with quadruple brass who first dared venture on the treacherous floor of ocean. And we must not withhold our praise for the great Oratorian who first established the science of Church history, and set the example himself. Since then this study has been marvellously perfected.<sup>18</sup> The relics and fragments of the Apostolic period, the annals of the Middle Ages, the letters of the popes, the councils and synods, the liturgies, cus-

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<sup>17</sup> Who could write more frankly than Baronius concerning the Roman Church in the tenth century: "Dum . . . ipsa Romana Ecclesia casura et interitura penitus videri potuisset, tot improbis, sceleratis, impudicis, praedonibus invasoribus, sanguinariis et grassatoribus hoc saeculo Sedem Apostolicam invadentibus eamque depravatis moribus conspurcantibus . . . Sede Petri sic reddita jam prorsus vili et contemptibili, effecta ancilla regina Gentium, et conculcata pedibus filiorum, et praesidentium attrita vestigiis, expositaque ludibrio transeuntium." *Ann. Ecc.* ad an. 1000. n. 21.

Baronius, we now know, was even unjust to the tenth century. A great Protestant historian, Giesebrecht, has treated much more favorably the "saeculum aeneum." In his *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit* (I, p. 773) he says: "It is easy to show in what senses this epoch was poor and needy. Not only our modern world, but several mediæval centuries have surpassed it in the richness of social developments, and in the strength and depth of their social culture. Nevertheless, it was full of power and hope. Countless tiny fountains of life are everywhere bubbling up from its soil, and it is with regret that we turn our eyes away from them. The period does not resemble the autumn with its fruits, nor the spring with its leafy crown, nor the summer tricked out in all its bloom. It is rather like those days when the seed begins to sprout and the woods show to the distant traveller their yet bare branches, but to the near onlooker expose a thousand swelling buds that need only the warm glance of the sun to blossom out into form and color."

<sup>18</sup> The numerous chronological errors of Baronius gave occasion for the *Critica historico-chronologica* of Antonio Pagi (1689) and his nephew, Francesco Pagi, (1705-1727). Raynald continued the Annals from 1198 to 1565, Laderchi from 1566 to 1571, and in our time Anton Theiner from 1572 to 1583. Other attempts at a continuation, but of minor value, are those of Bzovius ((1198-1565), and Spondanus (1198-1640). Indispensable, as far as it goes, is the work of Gerhard Rauschen, *Jahrbuecher der Christlichen Kirche unter dem Kaiser Theodosius dem Grossen* (378-395), Herder, Freiburg, 1897, a critical survey, with logical rearrangement, of this section of the Annals from the standpoint of new materials and modern criticism.

toms, inscriptions, monuments, the remnants of Christian art, the epitaphs of the early Christians, the biographies of famous Christians, the rules of monastic orders, the details of primitive evangelization, of the relations of Church and State in all the great politico-ecclesiastico struggles, the monuments of Christian literature,—all these, and much more, have been collected, edited and re-edited with the greatest precision.

Moreover, the subsidiary sciences of Church history have greatly developed. Thus, palæography, epigraphy, chronology, ecclesiastical geography, numismatics, heraldry, have each reached the dignity of an independent science. It is true to say that since the days of Baronius no science has had so many and laborious devotees; no science has so impassioned men of all countries and degrees of culture, has produced such a multitude of valuable collections and general works, as the science of Church history. For the most part these works have issued from the pens of modest and humble toilers. There is scarcely a fact, a date, a minute detail of the early Christian life which has not been collected into its proper place, and discussed with becoming earnestness. No entomologist ever looked more painfully for strange insects, no astronomer ever sought more wistfully for new stars, no geologist ever turned up the peaceful earth with more eagerness than the later ecclesiastical historians have roamed over the vast fields of human events during the last eighteen hundred years.

## VII.

The writers of Church history have become convinced that it is absolutely necessary to have an accurate knowledge of the corresponding periods of civil history, of the climate, geography, and mental culture of different lands, of the social and economic conditions of each period. If the great facts of Church history are the warp, these are the woof of the mighty web. The acts of churchmen are human acts, and human acts are the result of many determining motives; we must strike the balance of them all if we would be just to individuals, parties, or epochs. Time and space, to begin with, are general determining conditions of all human action, utterly inconceivable outside of their

mighty cycles. The working of political institutions can never be quite indifferent to the Catholic Church, since her action is commensurate with time and the earth, and is destined to affect mankind while he dwells on this footstool of God. Here everything is of importance, to the general, if not to the local or partial writer of history. To thoroughly grasp the rapidity of the spread of Christianity, the formation of its episcopate, the peculiarities of the persecutions, one must understand the unique character of the civil government of Rome, vast and even, easy and tolerant in non-essentials, based on the municipal idea—the common weal—symbolized in the imperial genius. The student of mediæval Church history risks the loss of his time if he has not first mastered the spirit and details of feudalism, within which all-embracing condition the mediæval life grew and flourished. The function of land-ownership, the vivid sense of personal loyalty to the immediate chief, the weakness of commerce and industry, the mystic idealism of rich and ardent but undeveloped natures just rising to a higher and broader plane of life, the absence of great cities and consequent free movement and intercourse, the collapse of the continuity of civil government, with all that such a break means,—all this, and much more, is needed by the Church historian for an adequate criticism of those ages that stretch from Gregory the Great to the Fall of New Rome (604-1453). How the ecclesiastical conditions vary in the great Italian trading republics like Venice or Florence, and in the semi-pastoral, warlike clan-world of mediæval Ireland and Scotland! In the first the Church dwelt in the high and splendid seats of earth, among its merchants and bankers and wealthy carriers; in the second she labored among isolated peoples, proud of unbroken ancestry, loyal to domestic traditions, and suspicious of all continental interference. Indeed, to understand the importance of civil history, we need only to look on our own Church to understand that it cannot hope to go uninfluenced by such things as a widespread and successful democracy that has passed the stage of experiment, by applied science that reaches the minutest details of domestic and social life, by the general personal independence that arises from the universal recognition of personal worth and right as the corner-stone of society, by the sharp and free criticism of all bureaucracy in

which is betrayed, however remotely, the fear of a re-enslavement under outlived inferior conditions.<sup>19</sup>

Apropos of the above, we cannot pass over the influence of climate and topography on the history of the Church. They are the immediate conditions of space, and affect notably the tempers and dispositions of races and epochs. Energy or indolence, passive receptivity or manifold "pushfulness," are the results of climate, whose changes again are often the work of man himself. "We are like a race of little but daring giants," says Herder, "who descend from the hill tops to valley and plain, and lay our yoke on the whole earth, and with our weak hands compel even the atmosphere to obey."<sup>20</sup> Forest and river, field and mine, mountain-pass and lakeland, sea and harbor, are elements that can never be utterly left out of consideration among the secondary causes of human events. The rude shepherds who built Roma Quadrata were wise men in their day, for here the Tiber begins to be navigable; here they could gather the wine, corn, oil and timber from the valleys of the Chiana, the Nar, and the Anio, that is, from the rich lands of Etruria; hence, in turn, they could exchange these products with all the peoples of the Midland Sea.<sup>21</sup> And again, when a new Rome had to be built, how worldly-wise was the son of Constantius Chlorus when he despised the sentimental charms of Ilion and reared the new imperial throne on the Golden Horn, where the pressing problems of observation, security and transportation could be most easily

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<sup>19</sup> History will not stay written. Every age demands a history written from its own standpoint,—with reference to its own social conditions, its thought, its beliefs, and its acquisitions, and therefore comprehensible to the men who live in it. Truth, justice, honor, the great principles of human association, have not changed, but man's apprehension of them has steadily grown clearer as his determination to live up to them has grown stronger, and as the individual has become more conscious of his powers, both physical and intellectual. "History and Democracy," in the *American Historical Review*, vol. 1, p. 5, (October, 1896.)

<sup>20</sup> *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Bk. VII, c. III. 3.

<sup>21</sup> The work of Rome in history was two-fold,—first and foremost to create Italian unity and then, with the power so gained, to solve the problems her rivals could not solve, the maintenance of peace and order in the Mediterranean, the civilization of the ruder races round its coasts, and the defense of that civilization against the barbarians of the East and North. The place of Rome in Italy partly explains the union of Italy under Roman supremacy; the place of Italy in the Mediterranean is a still larger factor in the extension of that supremacy over the civilized world.—How and LEIGH, *History of Rome*, 1896, p. 2.

solved! What has the cold, frowning, impassable wall of the Pyrenees meant for Spain, the capricious Nile for Christian Egypt, the interminable flow of Volga for Russia.<sup>22</sup> Barring an excessive application, these considerations are of great use to every student of Church history.

## VIII.

While the materials for Church history have been collected with so much pains, the use made of them is still more remarkable. In place of the simple credulity of the ages of faith, the

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<sup>22</sup> "Among historic spots there are some whose interest is oecumenical. In them the whole world, at least the whole world of Aryan Europe, lies before you as a figure. The history of tongues and creeds and races rises more clearly before our sight as we tread the Marble Way of Palermo, as we think how tall ships rode at anchor at either side of us, as we pass from the haven where the men of Canaan first made their home, by the palace of the Emirs to the palace of the Kings, to the Church which holds the dust of the Wonder of the World, to the arch which records the victory of the last Augustus who planted the Cross of Christendom and the Eagle of Rome on the shores which had seen the conquests of Agathoklēs, of Regulus and of Roger. From the tomb of Frederic and the trophies of Charles we may go back to the noblest centre that any city of man can show; under the shelter of the four guardian virgins we look up to the mountains on the three sides of us, to the mid-sea of Europe on the fourth; we look up to the height on which the thunderbolt of Carthage, Hamilkar Barak himself, kept his camp where men now go to pay homage to St. Rosalia; we look up to the western height, to the royal mount which William the Good crowned with his wondrous minster; we cast our eyes over the plain where Miletus won his spoil of Punic elephants to the hill down whose slopes marched Garibaldi and his Thousand. The pages of the whole world's history are open to us within the walls of the city thrice won for Europe, once won for Christendom by the Epeiros, the Roman and the Norman; the rival nations of the earth seem gathered in their meeting-place within the happy City of the Threefold Tongue. There we see the great cycles of man's history alive before us; we see the Byzantine Greek, the African Saracen, carrying on the memory and the work of the colonists of old Hellas and old Phoenicia, till they could rest for awhile from the eternal strife of the Aryan and Semitic man, till each could flourish unharmed after his own fashion beneath the equal sceptre of the kings of Teutonic blood and Roman speech."—FREEMAN, *Methods of Historical Study*, p. 315.

science of Historical Criticism has sprung up.<sup>23</sup> Hard experience of human ignorance, weakness and deception has compelled students to examine more closely the genuinity and integrity of historical materials; the authentic pieces have been in great measure separated from the forgeries; a multitude of interpolations recognized; another multitude of miscellaneous tamperings detected. The ancient manuscripts where they yet exist have been examined with very great care,—the place of their origin, the originals from which they were copied sought after. Besides that, the historical materials have been carefully separated into public indestructible monuments, and tradition written, oral, or pictorial; the characters of authors have been more carefully studied, their early training with all its perdurable force; their likes, dislikes, hates and attachments; the influence of time, place and surroundings, more carefully noted. Men have learned to control the statements of annalists and chroniclers by other witnesses. They have discovered that under the faded surface of the manuscript page there are possible many strata of materials, many bits of patchwork, that many industrious hands may have labored at a work that to us seems to be what it claims for itself, the personal offspring of a single mind. They have seen the forgery of entire annals covering several centuries, and so affecting the history of a certain nation that even today their influence continues to be felt. Thus they have learned to yield only that measure of assent which is justified by the amount of valid evidence before them. For the true

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<sup>23</sup> "En histoire, comme dans toutes les autres branches des connaissances humaines, il ne faut accepter es maîtres que comme des guides. Ils doivent nous faire remarquer tous les monuments qui peuvent nous mener à la vérité, nous aider à en saisir la valeur et nous faire arriver de cette manière, par une route droite et facile, à l'évidence que les premiers explorateurs n'ont atteinte que par de longs détours et au prix de pénibles travaux. Là se borne leur rôle. Celui qui recoit ainsi leurs leçons, loin d'être jeté dans la perplexité par l'opposition de leurs manières de voir, trouvera toujours un grand avantage à entendre des enseignements contraires; car il sera plus assuré de ne perdre aucune des indications qui peuvent éclairer son jugement. A mesure qu'il avancera, il s'accoutumera à tout examiner par lui-même, à ne rien admettre que sur bonne preuve, et bientôt son esprit, développé et fortifié par l'exercice, pourra s'aventurer seul dans le champ des découvertes historiques, signaler des monuments et des aspects encore inconnus, éclaircir, rectifier sur bien des points les vues de ses devanciers et reculer les bornes du domaine de la science."—DE SMEDT, S. J., *Principles de la Critique Historique*. Paris, 1883, p. 42.



historian is not a mere reciter or narrator, but a judge who must decide by the evidence, and not by his own feelings.

The methods of critical control sufficient for a credulous age, when the monuments and documents were few or unknown, are not valid for another when they are abundant, and the critical temperament is common. One must distinguish between the value of the texts in their original language and in a translation, or, as sometimes happen in a translation of a translation; again, between texts in free untrammelled prose and metrical texts where the chronicle is hemmed by certain claims of rhyme or quantity. Allowance must be made for the genius of the language itself. Crucial words of ancient writers must be interpreted according to their current value when written, and not according to accepted or archaic use. The student must carefully abstain from transferring to the past his present prejudices or convictions. These are the result of other and later knowledge and experiences, and it is as unjust to make them the criteria of men and things in the past as it would be to apply to youth the judicial severity with which we estimate the doings of a maturer age.

In this century, more than in any other, all the native gifts of the mind have been expended on the elaboration of the ancient materials for Church history,—the power of combination, the frequent and correct use of analogy, the rare and delicate skill in restoring missing links of narrative, the happy use of the hypothesis. Here the Church historian has need of certain mental virtues common to him with the ethnologist,—a certain creative gift, a power of compelling the presence of fugitive links or elements through a sure intuition based on much general knowledge and experience, familiarity with all existing material as well as with the history of his problem and the native endowment of a peculiar genius or skill, whose primitive origin and measure are often as hard to trace as the countless runlets that first meet in a fountain of crystal depth and purity. A John Baptist De Rossi and a Louis Duchesne are the products of much more time and wider remoter influences than can easily be determined.

## IX.

A few words may not be amiss apropos of the particular utility which certain theological sciences draw from the study of Church history. We may divide the theological sciences roughly into four great branches, as they have for their specific object the Holy Scriptures, the Doctrine of the Church, her Discipline, and her Worship.

*Holy Scripture.*—The basis of all scientific theology is the Holy Scriptures, as held and interpreted by the Church. But how important a part does the history of the Church play in the study of Holy Scriptures! Who can claim to know the Scriptures if he is not in some measure acquainted with such problems as the formation of the Canon, both of the Old and New Testament, the literary history of the great versions both in the classical and vernacular tongues, the manner of the preservation of the original texts, the views of different epochs on the Scriptures, the influence of the latter on popular life, the different styles of interpretation, the limits of their popularity, and their peculiar influence upon theological science as well as upon the development of Church institutions. In the first Church history that was ever written, that of Eusebius, a very large part is given to the problem of the Canon of the Scriptures. No one will properly understand the Latin Middle Ages who does not know something of the history of the Vulgate.<sup>24</sup> In the same manner, whoever would understand the history of modern England cannot leave out the marvellous influence of King James' Bible. The vernacular tongues of Europe are saturated with influences drawn from the Latin Vulgate. Without a

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<sup>24</sup> L'histoire de la Vulgate est encore presque inconnue, et pourtant elle mérite, à tous égards, d'attirer l'attention. La Vulgate est, en effet, à peu près la seule forme sous laquelle la Bible ait été répandue, pendant mille ans, dans tout l'occident; c'est la seule encore qui soit en usage dans l'église catholique. De la langue de la Vulgate, où le latin rustique des premiers siècles chrétiens se mêle à la latinité hébraïsante de Saint Jérôme, sont sorties pour une grande part, les langues romanes et particulièrement la langue française. La Vulgate a été, par excellence, le livre du moyen-âge. Aucun ouvrage n'a été copié si souvent et avec un si grand luxe, et son histoire se confond avec l'histoire de la paléographie, en même temps qu'elle est un des plus beaux chapitres de l'histoire de l'écart chrétien.—SAMUEL BERGER, *Histoire de la Vulgate*, (Paris, 1893, Pref.) p. 1.

knowledge of this book, that was more to Teuton and Kelt than Homer ever was to the Hellene, the history of the thoughts and style of a Dante is unintelligible, and away beyond Dante the numerous old Irish texts that furnished the rough material for the Vision of the great Seer themselves bear deep traces of the influence of this extraordinary version. There is such a thing as the genius of a language,—some delicate, elusive, but infinite charm that haunts the long use of accustomed accents, and has power to awaken the memories, sentiments, and emotions of the past, and clothe them with a soft halo of love and respect that no other human agency can imitate! Who will thoroughly understand the Christian literature of the first three centuries, and the propagation of the faith among the Jews and pagans, if he be not acquainted with the history of the Septuagint, that marvellous version of the Scriptures, which was like the broad, strong bridge over which the Jews came into the Church of Christ. Thus, too, we see the primitive influence of the Latin Church on the early Irish Church in the tenacity with which the latter clung for centuries to the old Itala version long after it had been given up elsewhere in Europe. Then again, to understand the origin of the Christian state in the ninth century, and the powerful influence of religion, it is very useful to know what a part the Old Testament played, with its theocratic form of government, and its absolute subordination of the civil to the spiritual. These are merely hints at the relation of Church history to the Scriptures. Every heresy, in its initial stages, at least sought to shelter itself behind the rampart of Scripture. I might add the influence of commentaries, homilies, the catechetical and missionary instructions,—based, as a rule, on these versions, and which colored accordingly the life of the Church and the mediæval peoples.

*Doctrine.*—The doctrines of the Church are contained in the “deposit of faith,” committed by Christ to the keeping of the ecclesiastical authority, and to which nothing may be added nor from which may anything be taken. But that does not prevent a certain development in every age, a clearer comprehension, a deeper penetration, a more luminous vision of the inter-relations

between these truths.<sup>25</sup> Now, this evolution of Christian dogma is unintelligible without a knowledge of Church history. Without that knowledge we are liable to fall into one of two extremes, either to deny any development whatsoever, and thus lay ourselves open to the charge of ignorance and fanaticism, or to overstep the lawful limit and maintain a heresy. The original documents of the early Church are few and mutilated. The history of those times tells us that men wrote comparatively little from a speculative point of view, and a great deal from a practical, i. e., they were apologists whose chief work was to defend the great fundamental teachings of Christianity rather than expound scientifically all its tenets. We know, too, that they observed a certain prudential secrecy concerning their domestic and internal institutions—the sacraments, discipline, life, devotions and the like,—mindful of the words of Christ: “Cast not your pearls before swine.” We are aware also that the persecutors destroyed countless copies of Christian works, especially in the persecution of Diocletian. Shortly after, new controversies arose which so absolved men’s minds that they forgot in a great measure the early Christian literature, and it is such antiquaries as Eusebius and St. Jerome that we may thank for the knowledge of the existence of many early Christian books, whose context is now unfortunately lost. Yet, of what is left we must make the best possible use. One sees at a glance how valuable each author becomes, how anxious we are to know about his character, his journeys, what lands he visited, what was his learning; how serious a thing a single date may be; with what anxiety we seek to fix the actual contemporary meaning of important words; with what deep interest we follow the excavations in Rome and in those parts of Asia Minor where Christianity was first introduced; how necessary it is to follow the social and legal changes in heathen life under the softening and purifying influence of Christianity. In a word, the student of

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<sup>25</sup> Its (the Church’s) explanation of dogmas is influenced by ecclesiastical acts or events, its interpretations of prophecy are directly affected by the issues of history, its comments upon scripture by the conclusions of the astronomer and geologist, and its casuistical decisions by the various experiences, political, local, and psychological, with which times and places are ever supplying it.” NEWMAN, *Idea of a University*, Discourse III, §4.

the doctrines of the early Church must resign himself to become acquainted, to some extent, not only with Church history, but with profane history, with the history of Greek and Latin literature, with archæology profane and ecclesiastical. Our life to-day is a part of the actual social complex, unintelligible without it. Five hundred years from now the doctrines of the Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception may be surrounded with many difficulties that a complete knowledge of our history would dispel.

*Ecclesiastical Discipline.*—The discipline of the Church through the ages is one of the most interesting as well as one of the most puzzling of problems. In the light of Church history we see how she is ever adapting herself to the age, society, and government, the nation, the popular needs; that she never allows herself to utterly crystallize, never clings desperately to a departing order of things, but seeks ever, with all gentleness and firmness, to cut loose from the wreckage of the past.

In the beginning the memory of the apostolic administration, imbedded in the hearts of the first disciples, sufficed for the government of the Church, coupled with the written legislation of the Gospel and the Epistles. What a vivid portrait of the ideal government of these decades is contained in the Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians! Then came with years short written summaries of the apostolic precepts, with adaptations of them to the altered circumstances of the second and third centuries,—such books as the Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apostolic Canons, and the older portions of the Apostolic Constitutions, the early Church legislation of Egypt, perhaps the Canons of Hippolytus. The curious Canons of Gregory Thaumaturgus and Peter of Alexandria belong to this period, as well as the Cyprianic and Cornelian reforms. Add to these the synods of the second and third centuries, the great councils of the fourth and fifth, as well as the papal decretal correspondence that grows more frequent from the end of the fourth century, certain acts and constitutions of the Christian emperors, and we have the groundwork on which at the beginning of the sixth century arises the first attempt at a codification of the Church law.

What a marvellous net-work of administration the govern-

ment of the Church exhibits to us to-day, reaching on one hand to the most trivial actions, and on the other dealing with nations and epochs and cultures! All this did not grow in a day. In the beginning all ecclesiastical life centred about the bishop. The priests were his spiritual crown, his counsel, his catechists; the deacons his temporal arm.<sup>26</sup> In time the Roman Church broke up the diaconal office; while reserving the nobler attributions to the deacons, she divided the inferior ones among the sub-deacons, the acolytes, porters, lecturers and exorcists. It was about this nucleus of the organized hierarchy that grew up the minor societies of the deaconesses, widows, virgins, notaries, confessors and martyrs, ascetics, flossors and the like,—according as circumstances favored, and in accordance with the principles of Catholic faith. In the midst of heresy and persecution among the masses of the poor, suffering and abandoned, the episcopal authority grew, favored no little by the imperial character of the age and the municipal constitution of the empire. The authority of its head became more visible and tangible, so that at the beginning of the fourth century the Bishop of Rome stands out as the chief of a hierarchy which had its hand on the popular pulse from the Euphrates to the Danube. This episcopate was strong enough not only to arrest the decline of the empire and assuage the evils of its dissolution, but also to impose upon the barbarian kings and peoples, to whom it became the intermediary of Roman culture, language, moderation and religion. The affection of Romans and barbarians enriched the Roman Church with patrimony after patrimony until it became the most powerful land-owner in the West. When the Eastern emperors could no longer protect the people of Italy from Lombard or Saracen; when for many decades already the Holy See had been the quasi-ruler of a large part of Italy, Providence gave it a juridical title to that small state from which it formed and directed Europe for seven centuries.

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<sup>26</sup> "Do ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and to the deacons pay respect as to God's commandments. Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the Church apart from the bishop. Let that be held a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the Catholic Church." St. IGN. *ad Smyrnaeos*, c. 8.

*Ecclesiastical Worship.*—No department of theology stands more in the need of the light of Church history than that which is concerned with the exterior cultus of the Church. We see the origin of this cultus in the Eucharistic banquet, the center of Christian life, ordained by Christ Himself. But the first Christians were Jews, by birth or descent, and they engrafted the Christian services on certain traditional forms of their own—prayers, reading, instruction, thanksgiving and the like. In time they separated the love-feast or Agape from the Eucharist and the celebration of the latter was fixed in the morning instead of the evening. In different lands different ceremonies grew up. Since the middle of the third century the Latin service was a fact at Rome. The Greek tongue, which had prevailed during the second century, though never to the utter exclusion of the Latin, ceased to maintain its prestige. The Hellenic influences were driven out of Rome by the growing power and numbers of the barbarians, and by a kind of re-birth of local pagan Romanism. At the same time, by the foundation of Constantinople the Greek tongue obtained a new lease of life and power in an atmosphere more favorable to it than that of Old Rome. The virulent jealousy of the clergy of Constantinople, that eternal obstacle to the unity of the Churches; the great and little schisms that followed the Council of Chalcedon; the loss of the Illyrian provinces early in the eighth century, the use of their vernacular conceded to the converted Slavs in the ninth century, practically fixed, with some exceptions, the boundaries of the Latin rite up to the discovery of America.

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